

A
most Excellent
TREATISE

Concerning the
DIVINE
PERFECTIONS,
AND
PERSONS.

Suited to Ordinary Capacities.

A most excellent Book this.

LONDON,

Printed for *Richard Wilkin*, at the
King's-Head in St. Paul's Church-
yard. 1706.

REAR VIEW

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PERMISSIONS



Suited to Ordinary

LONDON

Printed for Richard H. Smith, at the
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P R E F A C E.

WHAT in the following Treatise is presented to the Reader's consideration, is the substance of some Discourses delivered to a plain Auditory, on the Text here prefix: and it is for the use of such Ordinary Christians, that they are now (with some alteration) made publick.

The Divine nature is the most noble Theme, or Subject we can employ our thoughts about: and a competent knowledge of the same is necessary to the Salvation even of Christians of an ordinary rank or capacity. Their Calling obliges them often to meditate Of God: but whether all who are under this obligation do in any due measure discharge the same, may well be questioned. If any be ask'd, whether they believe, that God is a most perfect, Self-existent Being, Spiritual, wise, holy, pure or uncompoundd, Almighty, Eternal, unchangeable? they will undoubtedly answer in the Affirmative: where yet, if requir'd, a little to explain themselves, what it is they believe, and on what grounds and reasons; 'tis to be fear'd, the account that many would give would be found very lame and imperfect: what account then may be hoped for from such Of (what they Profess to believe) the Doctrine of the Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

'Tis for the assistance of such weak Christians, that this Treatise is compil'd. And this is to be its excuse to the more learned Reader (if it falls into the hands of any such)

The Preface.

such) that the great truths concerning God are here deliver'd in the plainest words the Author could think of: and the Same things Often repeated; What, the difficulty of the matter, and the weakness and dulness of those for whom the Treatise was intended, seem'd to make necessary.

There are likewise some Phrases and expressions here left, which suit better with the Style of a Sermon, than the Composure of a Treatise; which the kind Reader will easily pardon. But notwithstanding some Repetitions, or further explications, or proofs, of some truths before delivered, I would presume to commend the Book to the second perusal of the plain Reader: The nature, difficulty, weight of many things here deliver'd, seems to require this. By such reflection and meditation the Reader may possibly discover, and be convinc'd of some errors he has hitherto been in, or attain to a more perfect knowledge of, or a more confirmed Faith in those great Truths that are generally held to be necessary to Salvation.

Knowledge of the inward life is necessary to the salvation of Christians of an ordinary rank or capacity. Calling obliges them to this meditation. God: but whether all who are under any obligation do in any due measure discharge the same, they well be questioned.

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Gen. I. 26, 27.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.

THE words oblige us to Discourse both Of the Nature of God, and the nature of man. The knowledge of either leads to the knowledge of the other. If we know the nature of God we may know our own; and if we know our own nature, we cannot be wholly ignorant of His.

It is the Divine nature that we shall mostly speak of; Of his Perfections, and of his Persons: and then something, of the Image of God in man.

And First Of the Divine nature. And here we shall not be much solicitous of the Order wherein to present things to your consideration. The ordinary method of doctrine (which requires that Generals should be spoken of before particulars, Causes before their effects, &c.) has little or no place in the great Subject we are to discourse of. The Divine nature is one only Substance, really Existing, and Of It self; so that there is nothing of General consideration here, no cause or effect, no antecedent or consequent, nothing before or after other, nothing greater or less than another.

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There is nothing in God therefore, that can be Demonstrated (taking this word in its strict signification, for the proving of an effect by its necessary foregoing cause) by any thing that is in Him Before: for All in Him (as we shall hereafter shew) is altogether, and All is One and the same. His Adorable Perfections are indeed ordinarily thought of by Us as if they were many, but we know not what first in our meditations we should begin with, nor Of any necessary Order wherein to carry our meditations on.

But though we cannot (properly speaking) from any one Perfection of God Demonstrate any other, yet any of the Divine perfections may be Proved by any other whatever. A right belief of any one of them will lead us to the same concerning all the rest: and to the knowledge, not onely of what He Necessarily is in himself, but likewise, of what he Freely is in his Will, counsels or Decrees, with respect to his creatures, and particularly towards man; as that he is Just, and True, and Good in all His counsels, ways, and works; The perfect knowledge, or faith of all which, we have from the Holy Scripture.

Since therefore, begin we where we will, to discourse or meditate concerning the Divine Nature, if we think aright Of That we begin with, it will lead us to some knowledge of all the rest, we need not be much concern'd as to the order of our Discourse, where to begin, and how to proceed. Our main design is, by laying before you, what the light of reason discovers, or the Scripture declares concerning the Adorable Nature, to stir you up to devout and frequent Meditations concerning God, that hereby ye may attain to what the Scripture requires, even "to delight your selves in the Lord, Isa. 58. 14. and to be able to say with the Psalmist, Ps. 104. 34. "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

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C H A P. I.

A short Description of the Divine nature.

THE Divine nature is in the Scripture describ'd to us, as the Fulness of all perfection. That He is the Living God, perfectly holy and powerful, wise and good; and that what he necessarily is in himself, the same he freely is towards us. That he is in these and all other perfections infinitely more excellent than all other beings, and infinitely different from all, that there is none to be compared to, none like to him. Isa. 40. 18.

Such descriptions of the Divine perfections, counsels and decrees, and the Incomparable Excellence of God in all, are every where in Scripture to be met with, and our Christian profession is that we believe the Scripture; what we there read, or hear thence, concerning God: but thoughts and meditations are necessary, to beget in us true and awful apprehensions of the Adorable nature. And in the knowledge of, and belief in Him we may and ought to Grow, as long as we live; for in this world we can never arrive to the full knowledge of God: but the more our faith concerning him is enlarged, the more we glorifie him, and the firmer will our hope in him, and the greater our comforts be.

C H A P. II.

Of the meaning of the Words whereby the Divine nature and perfections are commonly express'd.

IN order to what we have further to discourse, it will be necessary to consider the meaning of the Words whereby the Divine nature and perfections are commonly express'd. The words, of which we shall give some account, are these; The Goodness of God. His holiness, and truth:

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His unity : Spirituality : strength, power : beauty : His wisdom, knowledge : Love, joy, happiness : His Self-existence, perfection : Infiniteness, Eternity, omnipresence, immensity : purity : immutability : glory. His Dominion, sovereignty, authority : His righteousness, and mercy : And that he is incomprehensible, ineffable, adorable. We shall give a brief account of the meaning of these Words : but shall not think it necessary, in the following Discourses to insist largely on All the Divine perfections, and attributes, but on some only, which may lead us to the knowledge of all the rest.

Of the Words we have mentioned, some are of a more General and comprehensive meaning and signification, some more particular. Not that there is any thing General in God himself, for we have already said, that He is one particular nature : but, as to the words we have mention'd, some of them in their Meaning or signification include many Perfections, others fewer, others only one. Again, some signify only what he is Absolutely in himself, others what he is with respect, or in relation to his creatures, and some words do in their meaning include both.

By the Goodness of God is ordinarily meant his loving kindness to his creatures, particularly towards man : but since every creature is for this reason, good, because God has made it, we are undoubtedly to affirm, that Goodness is Essential to the Divine nature, that He is Goodness it self, Infinite goodness Of himself, in himself, and to himself.

By the Life of God we mean, That Spiritual Sense or perception that he has concerning Himself : and (by an ordinary turn of Speech, whereby causes are put for their effects) he may be called, Life, because he is the Giver of life, the Author of all life, natural or spiritual, that is in any of his creatures.

His Immortality. He cannot die.

His Holiness. His purity ; his essential Justice ; according to which he loves himself above all things : But Justice commonly signifies, his dealing with his creatures according to Right.

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Truth signifies both what he is in his nature, and what he is to his creatures. He is Truth it self, the perfect reality of being; and there is a perfect Harmony between all his Perfections. And True likewise he is with respect to his creatures; His works are true, because made by him according to the pattern he had before Of them in his own mind, and he is true in his words, his promises, and in all his ways.

His Uniry. He is One, not many; it is the Glory of his nature, that there neither is nor can be any God beside him.

His Spirituality. He is a Spirit, not a body; there is nothing of bulk, figure, colour, or shape belonging to him.

His Strength: The firmness of his Existence or being; and the power by which he can do all things; none can hinder him from working, he can hinder any other.

His Beauty. The Loveliness of His nature.

His Wisdom, knowledge, understanding. He knows Himself, his own Glorious nature; for herein consists the perfection of his knowledge. He knows likewise his own free thoughts, will, Decrees; and all things that ever were, are, or shall be.

His Love. This often signifies his free goodness to his creatures; but he likewise is essentially the Love of himself, who is the Perfection of Goodness and Beauty.

His Joy and Happiness, in the Love and Enjoyment of Himself.

His Self-existence. There is no Cause of his Being, he owes not his perfections to any other; whatever he is, he is wholly and only Of himself.

His Perfection. There is nothing wanting, nothing redundant or superfluous in the Divine nature, nothing can be taken from, nothing added thereto.

Infiniteness. He is boundless in all perfections; particularly, He is not limited to, or by any time, or place, and so it speaks his eternity, omnipresence, immensity.

His Eternity. He is before all time, he is without beginning,

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ginning, without interruption of being, and without end. His Omnipresence. He is present with all his creatures, he fills Heaven and earth. His Immensity, His unmeasurable Greatness, The Heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

His Purity. This sometime signifies his Holiness, which we have already mentioned; but it signifies likewise the uncompoundedness of his nature; He is not a part of any other nature, nor is any other a part of him; Nor are his Perfections so many parts of his nature, for they do not really differ from one another, nor from himself; as we shall hereafter shew.

His Immutability. Unchangeableness. There neither is, nor can be any change in him; What he is, he always was, and ever must be.

His Glory. The Excellence of all his perfections: and it signifies the same likewise as Manifested in and by his Word and Works.

His Dominion, Sovereignty, Authority. These speak what he is in relation to his creatures. That he is Supreme, or Above all beings, to him the right belongs of Ruling and Governing of all things, and to Dispose of all according to his most wise, righteous and blessed Will and pleasure.

His Mercy and Righteousness. The Tenderneſs of his love to his creatures; particularly, towards man, his Pitying of us in our misery, his pardoning of our sins upon our repentance, and faith, through the Merits of the obedience, sufferings, and death, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

He is Incomprehensible. The knowledge we have of him is rather a shadow, than a perfect representation of What he is in himself. Ineffable; unspeakable; no words can sufficiently express his nature. Adorable; He is to be honour'd, fear'd, worshipped by us.

CHAP. III.

The Plainness of Scripture in things necessary to Salvation.

THE holy Scripture being the Rule of faith, both as to what we are to believe concerning God, and as to all other things necessary to Salvation, before we proceed further, we think it convenient to discourse something, Of the different ways wherein sacred truths are there delivered, and Of the plainness of Scripture in things necessary to salvation.

As to this, we are to observe, that in Scripture, the great things of religion are sometime in Literal, and sometime in Figurative expressions delivered to us; so that, in some Passages, the Literal, in others, the Mystical sense is principally intended by the holy Ghost, and ought mostly by us to be attended to.

The Literal sense is, That which the Words according to their proper and ordinary signification do immediately import: The Mystical sense is, where under some Metaphor, or Similitude, a more refined, and spiritual meaning is contain'd.

Now as to these different senses, since the Scripture is given us for the Rule of our faith, 'tis certain, that we may, and ought to distinguish between the one and the other, and discern, Where the Words of the Scripture are to be understood according to their Literal, and where according to their Mystical or Spiritual sense.

The Scripture testifies Of it self that it is plain in all things necessary to salvation: ' that his Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Ps. 119. 115. That ' His Words are all plain to him that understandeth, Prov. 8. 9. That ' In Scripture we have eternal life. S. Joh. 5. 35. So that, if we endeavour to judge sincerely of the sense of the Scripture, as those who would have

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the comfort of a true faith, we shall not mistake as to the meaning of it in things necessary to salvation.

Now the general Rule, whereby we are to judge Of the meaning of those places of Holy Scripture that speak of the Divine nature, is this, where the Literal sense includes nothing of imperfection in it, such Passages are Literally true concerning God : but if the Literal sense includes any imperfection, the expression is Figurative, and we must interpret it to such a sense as is agreeable to the Perfection of the Divine nature, since we know, there is no imperfection in Him.

By this Rule we may discern, where the Scriptures that speak concerning God, or other great things of Religion, are to be understood in their Literal, and where in a Mystical sense. If we cannot do this, we cannot be sure of the meaning of any thing in Scripture concerning the great matters of Salvation, nor know whether our faith be grounded on the Word of God, or no. If we be so ignorant, we must lie open to the temptations of all Seducers.

And they indeed commonly presume, to teach, that the Scripture is a dark book, even where it speaks of things the belief of which is Necessary to Salvation : That it is so hard to be understood, that ordinary Christians, though with Sincerity of heart they apply themselves to the reading or hearing of the same, are not able to learn thence what they are to believe in order to their Salvation ; but that they must have a prophet, or some other infallible Guide to instruct them herein. Accordingly, the Papists have Their infallible Guide, that is, one whom they pretend so to be ; and other Sectaries, Theirs : These Several Leaders pretending to the Infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost, though to the confounding of their pretensions they in interpreting of the Scripture commonly contradict one another, even in things they affirm to be necessary to Salvation : Those Passages of Scripture which some of them explain Literally, others will have to be true only
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in a Mystical Sense; and what are explained by some, only to a Mystical sense, others of them will have to be Literally true.

This their Mutual Contradicting of one another, though it be, in the judgment of well-grounded Christians, an argument of the falseness of the pretensions they make to the Extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost, Yet it is withal to the distraction and trouble of many Unstable Souls, who, neglecting the use of ordinary powers and means which God has given them, would fain meet with some Prophet, or Infallible guide, or an extraordinary Inspiration within themselves, wandering in the meanwhile in the dark, neither knowing where they are, nor what they have to believe or do. And so it must necessarily be with them, as long as they wilfully shut their own eyes, or permit themselves to be so hood-wink'd by others, as to think they are not able to distinguish between a Substance and a Shadow, unless some extraordinarily inspired Guide tells them which is which.

But they who dare look into Scripture with their own eyes, or consider it in their own heart, are under no such doubts and uncertainties. They have the Ordinary assistance of the One only True and Infallible Guide, the Holy Ghost, and therefore may be assur'd, that while they use the Ordinary means and Powers which God has graciously given them, they shall not dangerously err in their Search after necessary truth. For that the grace of God is not wanting to any to whom the Gospel is preach'd, if they use the means there prescrib'd, and the Ordinances there Appointed, is what the Scriptures plainly, and frequently declare.

This gracious invisible assistance of God would more generally be believ'd, and relied on, were it not for the false pretensions that many make to an Extraordinary assistance, and the wild things they talk concerning the motions and operations of the Holy Ghost. With such Enthusiastick pretensions and talk the nation we live in is strangely infected. Hence the multitude both of false Doctrines,

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Doctrines, and false Teachers, and the bold pretensions they make to an extraordinary assistance in Prayer, or Preaching, or both; deluding hereby the hearts of ignorant and unstable Christians, so as that many of them become as wild, and self conceited, as the Teachers themselves; despising all Sober minded Christians, as destitute of the Spirit, or grace of God, because they believe nothing of their pretended extraordinary inspirations.

But this we should all know, that the grace whereby God Now assists the Souls either of the Ministers of the Gospel, or of other Christians, works not only gently and sweetly, but so secretly likewise, with their own inward powers, thoughts, and meditations, that it cannot ordinarily be distinguish'd from these; nor need it be, since they know by faith grounded on the Scripture, that they ought to ascribe all Spiritual good to the grace of God, according to that of Eph. 2. 8. 'By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of your selves: it is the gift of God.'

But to the further confirmation of that we have said, and to prevent error, we think it necessary to enlarge a little on two things, we have already intimated. 1. That the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that we speak of, is in the Gospel promised to those only that are Sincere. 2. That the Scripture is not so plain, nor the assistance of Divine grace so powerful, as to render the use of the Gospel ordinances unnecessary.

1. The assistance of the Holy Ghost, that we speak of, is in the Gospel promised to those only who are Sincere. Sincerity is indeed it self owing to the preventing grace of God: but the further grace, whereby persons are enabled to believe the Scripture in things necessary to Salvation, is not given to Save those who attain to Sincerity by the grace they are prevented with.

And we have reason to think, that the Scriptures are so pen'd or worded as they are, by the Inspired writers, not only to instruct us in other things, but likewise to Try the Sincerity of our hearts, to bring us to the knowledge

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of our selves, that we may know whether we be Sincere, or not. The Scripture it self declares this, Heb. 4. 12. The Word of God is quick (or living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intent of the heart. It is a discerner of the thoughts, and intent of the heart: And so makes manifest to our selves whether we sincerely desire the truth or no. And whether this Passage be to be understood Of the written, or of the substantial Word of God, that is, whether Of the holy Scripture, or Of the Son of God, who elsewhere is called, the Word, and the Word of God, it comes to the same. For it is Christ who tries us in this world, and he tries us by his word, the holy Scriptures, which are all of them the words of Christ, even the Scriptures of the Old Testament: for so the Apostle declares, 1. Pet. 1. 11. that it was the Spirit of Christ that spake by the ancient prophets; and that the Scriptures of the New Testament are His word, we suppose is not doubted of by any. Our Lord has further declared, 1. Jo. 12. 48. 'That the word that he has spoken the same shall judge us at the Last day: and surely, it concerns us to endeavour, with all Sincerity of heart to judge of the meaning of that Word, whereby we our selves must at last be judged: and if we so do, we shall not fail of attaining to the true meaning thereof in things necessary to salvation.

2. The Scripture is not so plain, nor the assistances of Divine grace so powerful, as to render the use of the Gospel Ordinances unnecessary. For these Ordinances are appointed, and graciously given us, of God himself; and it agrees not with his Wisdom so to work by some means, as to render the rest that he has appointed, useless, or unnecessary.

It is by the Scriptures themselves that we learn what the Ordinances of Christ are, and who they are by whom they are to be ministred to us: They speak sufficiently of the Qualifications, and Ordination of the Ministers of the Gospel;

Gospel; so that it is easie for any sincere enquirer to learn by the Scripture who the true and faithful Ministers of the Gospel are.

Ordinary Christians therefore (though they cannot read a word in the Scripture, yet) may easily learn thence, that they who teach that it is a dark Book, and of doubtful meaning, so that Christians, though they have the Grace of God, and sincerely desire the truth, cannot learn by it what they ought to believe; that they who would take the Bible out of the hands of the common People; they who in their publick Congregations give to their hearers no more of the Scripture than what they call, the Text, or Proofs, give reason to suspect, that they have some Doctrines to deliver to them, that are not contain'd in the Book of God, and consequently, are not faithful Ministers of Christ.

As on the other hand; they who declare and teach, that the words of Scripture are plain in things necessary to Salvation, so that Christians by the assistance of Divine grace and the use of the Gospel Ordinances may attain to the meaning of the same; they who exhort all that are able, frequently to read the Scriptures in their own Houses; and all Christians, though they cannot read, to keep a Bible by them, as every one desires, himself to keep the Evidences he has for his worldly possessions or inheritance; they who constantly Read a considerable portion of holy Scripture in the publick Congregation, accounting such Reading of it to be the true and most necessary Preaching of the Gospel; they who do, and declare these things, do hereby give to all Men just reason to believe, that they are the faithful Ministers of Christ, and that they never intend to deliver to their hearers any thing as necessary to Salvation, but what is contain'd in the Book of God.

CHAP.

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CHAP. IV.

Of the Purity of the Divine nature. And First, that he is not compounded with any Creature.

WE have given (Chap. II.) a brief Account of the meaning of several words, whereby the Divine perfections are express'd and set forth: but no words can sufficiently do this. We believe of God, that he is Goodness, Holiness, Truth, Beauty, Power, Happiness, Self-existent, Unchangeable, Eternal, Infinite: but that one wonderful Nature, that is these and all other Perfections, we know not. But, that all his Perfections are One pure uncompounded Nature, we may be convinc'd by those Sacred names whereby in Scripture he Stiles himself, Exo. 3. 14. "I AM THAT I AM: and, "I AM hath sent me unto "you.

Of which Purity or Uncompoundedness of the Divine nature we shall Discourse in this order. 1. Shew, that he is not compounded with any other Being. 2. That he is not compounded in himself.

1. God is not compounded with any created Being. He is not a Part of any being, nor is any creature in earth or Heaven a part of him: but he is one uncompounded Nature, infinitely Separate from all other Natures whatever.

But there is some difficulty in attaining to the belief of this, arising from the weakness of our own Souls, too prone to mingle our Imaginations with our Faith, and God, with his creatures. This weakness we find, when (to mention no others at present) we think of one of these two things, The Presence of God with his Creatures; or The blessed Union of the Divine and Humane, Natures, in the Person of Christ.

And first, as to the Presence of God with his creatures, this we are sure is on some accounts very near and intimate. He is not far, says the Apostle, Acts 17. 27. 28. 'from

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from every one of us : for in him we live, and move, and have our being. It is he alone who preserves in being all the things that he has made, and he rules and governs them in their motions and operations : Whence in the weakness of our reasonings we are apt to imagine, that there is a kind of composition between him and them ; that he is, as it were, the Soul of the World, animating (enlivening) all things according to their several Natures, as the Soul within us does the Body. The general proneness that has been observ'd in Mankind, in all Ages, to Idolatry ; to worship the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and Elements, arose in a great measure from this error. They imagined the things they saw to be Parts of the Divine Nature, and that the Living God was the Soul of all : and so they worshipped them together with him, and became Idolaters thereby.

For the avoiding of which Idolatry, we must not run (as in such cases many are apt to do) into the other extreme, and deny that God is really present with all his creatures ; but understand, that from such presence there arises not a composition between him and them.

That he is truly present with all beings the Scriptures plainly declare : that " He fills Heaven and Earth *Jer.* 23. 24. that " We cannot go from his Spirit, nor flee from his Presence. *Pf.* 139. 7. It follows, Verses 8, 9. 10. " If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there ; If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. But that, by being present with his creatures, he is not compounded with all, or any of them, we may hence know, because there is an Infinite difference between his Nature, and theirs ; between the Creator and the creature ; the Almighty Cause of all things, and the works and effects that are produced by him. They depend entirely on his blessed Will, He not in the least on them : He moves, alters, changes any of them at his pleasure, but is not in the least mov'd, chang'd or alter'd by them.

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hem. So that there is no manner of mixture, or composition of God with the creature, though he be intimately present with all.

2. As to the blessed and wonderful Union of the Divine and humane natures in the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, this is likewise what the Scripture teaches us to own. Gal. 4. 4. "God sent his Son made of a Woman. St. Jo. 1. 14. "The Word was made flesh. But there is not (properly speaking) any composition herein. Composition seems alway to be of Parts, that is, of things which are imperfect in themselves, and which mutually gain something by their being compounded together; but this is not found in the Union of the Divine and human natures in Christ. The eternal Son of God assumed or took human nature, the Soul and Body of Man, in the Womb of the Virgin, to his Person, which his Person is Eternal and Divine, and therefore absolutely perfect before he assumed the humane nature; by his assuming of this, the human nature indeed was highly exalted, tho' it continued humane nature, a Man, a creature still: but the Divine Person of the Son of God neither did, nor could receive any perfection, or change, by that union; and therefore was not compounded with humane nature thereby.

However, if any will affirm, that where there is so strait an union, there must be something like a composition, this may be granted, for we need not contend about Words: but it must alway be remember'd, that there is not a composition properly so called. There is neither mixture of Natures, nor union of Persons. Not a mixture of natures; for each nature continues perfect, and distinct, in Christ. No union of Persons; not one Person made up of two, nor by uniting of two together: for in Christ there is but one Person, and That Eternal and Divine.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

The Divine nature is Uncompounded in it self. There is no moral evil; no weakness in God.

2. **T**HE Divine nature is not compounded in it self. It consists not of Parts, nor of Degrees of perfection.

This we shall explain in several considerations. 1. There is no moral evil in God. 2. There is no weakness in him. 3. His Perfections are all the same one with another. Lastly, they are all the very Substance of God.

I. There is no moral evil in God. He is only Holy: there is no iniquity in him. This indeed is but a low consideration, a mean thing to be affirmed Of him: yet since it has pleased him to condescend thus to speak Of himself in the Scripture, it cannot be below us to take the same consideration.

For thus we read of him, Deut. 32. 4. 'He is a God of truth, and without iniquity. Ps. 92. 15. There is no unrighteousness in him. Neither in his nature, nor in his will, nor in his workings. He neither does, nor will do any evil. Ps. 89. 35. "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. Zeph. 3. 5. "The just Lord is in the midst thereof: he will not do iniquity: Thus it pleases him to speak Of himself, partly to prevent, partly to meet with, the foolish thoughts of man concerning him: for we are too prone to think "that he is altogether such a one as our selves. Ps. 50. 21. but we should carefully avoid this error, and firmly believe, that there is no kind of moral evil, nor in the least degree, in him.

II. As there is no wickedness, so neither is there any weakness in the Divine nature.

This the Scriptures fully declare, speaking much both of the Power and Wisdom of God. Of his power, strength, almightiness. "That he can do all things, "that with him nothing is impossible, "that none can hinder him, "in

in his designs, or workings, "That he neither faints, nor is weary. Frequently likewise do they speak Of the infinite knowledge of God; declaring, that he perfectly knows Himself, and all things. Particular Texts for the proof of this need not be cited.

But therefore, whereas weakness is sometime spoken of him in the Scripture; as, 1. Cor. 1. 25. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men; we may reasonably think, that the design of God in thus expressing himself is to meet with the folly of those men, who imagine that they have discover'd something of weakness, or folly in the ways of God: in answer to these, it is said, that the foolishness of God, that is, what they think to be such, is wiser than men; and the weakness of God, what they count such, is stronger than men; So that the words declare the greatness and wonderfulness both of the wisdom, and power of God, that what some esteem weakness, or folly in him, is above all the wisdom of men, and all the power of the world.

That there is no weakness in God we shall further shew in these three particulars; 1. He cannot do evil. 2. There are no Passions in God. 3. He is Unchangeable.

1. He cannot do evil. That he neither does, nor will do any, we have seen before: but were it possible for him to do any, this were weakness, and therefore is not in him. He cannot do any evil. This he declares Of himself in Scripture. "God that cannot lie, Tit. 1. 2. and again, Heb. 6. 18. "It is impossible for God to lie. And elsewhere, not only the possibility of doing evil, but of being inclin'd the least thereto is removed from him, "He cannot be tempted with evil, S. Jam. 1. 13.

2. There are no Passions in the Divine nature. Neither the passion of love, nor hatred, nor fear, nor anger, nor any other. Some of these are expressly removed from God in Scripture; as anger, Isa. 27. 4. "Fury is not in me. Jer. 7. 19. "Do they provoke me to anger? do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? "Do they provoke me to anger? Such questions imply a strong negation, or denial of the thing; they shew that it is not in

the power of the worst of men, by the worst deeds, to provoke God to wrath. And hence we are to conclude the same Of all other passions, as love, hatred, fear &c.

Where therefore we elsewhere in Scripture find passions ascribed to God ; as, that he loves the righteous ; hates the wicked, and is angry with them ; we are to understand such expressions in a way worthy of God, to wit, that by reason of the holiness of his nature he is ever willing and ready to do good to, and to reward the righteous, and likewise inclin'd to punish the evil doers. But though rewards, and punishments are different Effects, we cannot hence infer any difference of Causes in the Divine nature. And since in lower things we see that one and the same cause produces different effects, for thus the same heat of the Sun hardens clay, and softens wax ; and the same light is pain to weak, and pleasure to sound eyes ; it is easy to believe that the same unchangeable, righteous Will of God may in different men produce different effects, be to the joy of the one, and torment of the other.

3. God is Unchangeable. This likewise the Scriptures frequently and fully declare. It is plainly contain'd in those adorable names of God we have already mentioned. Exo. 3. 14. "I AM THAT I AM." and, "I AM" hath sent me unto you. He therefore is alway the Same. And this the inspired Psalmist declares, Ps. 102. 26, 27. "As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same. So he speaks Of himself in the Prophet, Mal. 3. 6. "I am the Lord, I change not. And so by the Apostle, S. Jam. 1: 17. "With him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. All change is either to the better or to the worse. That God should change to the worse is what, we suppose, no Christian can think : But neither can he change to the better, for he is already eternally, and Of himself, Infinitely Good, and so there is nothing better, for him to change to. He therefore is ever the same, according to that of the Psalmist, Ps. 96. 2. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God,

The Divine Perfections.

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C H A P. VI.

The Divine Perfections are all the Same one with another.

I. THE Divine perfections are all the same with one another. His Life is his Holiness; his Holiness, Power; his Power, Goodness; his Goodness, Eternity; and the same is true Of all the rest.

The Words whereby we express the Divine perfections have each of them a different meaning with Us, but they all signifie the same Thing in God. They have each of them a different meaning with Us: and the reason is, because these words do first and immediately signifie, not the Divine perfections as they really are in God, but the Apprehensions, or Conceptions that we have in our selves of those perfections: and the apprehensions that we have of the Divine Perfections are Imperfect, and so differ one from another. Thus, our conception of Eternity differs from that which we have of Almighty Power, and our apprehension of his Knowledge, from that which we have of his Holiness; and so in the rest: But the Thing they all point towards in God is One; in him there is only One Perfection, and That is All.

We apprehend the Divine perfections as differem one from another; and the Scripture in condescension to our weakness allows us so to do: for it often speaks Of them, as if they were many; though withal as united together, and mutually involving or inclosing one another. Thus we read Of his eternal power, Rom. 1. 26. as if there were some distinction between the eternity and power of God. Thus Ps. 99. 4. "The King's strength loveth judgment. Here strength and love are mentioned, as distinguished from one another, and both from judgment. And by these and the like expressions we may be convinc'd Of the mutual Agreement of the Divine Perfections, that there is a perfect Harmony between them all: And accordingly we may say, that his goodness is guarded with power, his power directed by wisdom and justice, his justice

Justice sweetned with goodness and mercy ; and the like.

But such conceptions of him (though they be allow'd) fall short of the glory of his nature, and answer not perfectly to the truth as it is in Him. What harmony or union soever we own to be between the Divine perfections, yet while we think of them as distinct one from another, we apprehend not any of them according to that perfection wherein they are in God. Life united to knowledge is not so perfect as that life which in its own nature is knowledge: power united to holiness is not so perfect as that power which it self is holiness. Therefore, since we believe that God is absolutely perfect, we must own, that His life is knowledge ; his power, holiness ; and accordingly, that any of his perfections are the same with any other, and that any one of them is All.

Now, in some perfections, the thing we speak of is more easily apprehended ; as, that the perfection of truth is life ; the perfection of life, knowledge ; of knowledge, wisdom ; of wisdom, holiness. In others, the sameness of the Divine perfections is not so easily conceiv'd ; as, that his holiness is power ; his eternity, love ; his power, goodness, &c. But therefore we ought the more frequently to meditate on this truth, that we may be fully convinced Of the same, that any one of the Divine perfections is All of them, and that all of them are truly One.

CHAP. VII.

The Divine perfections are the Substance of God.

LAstly, The Divine perfections are the very Substance of God, they are the Divine Nature. They are all (as we have shewn in the foregoing consideration) one perfection, and that one Perfection is God. He is not only the living God, but life it self ; not only holy, but holiness it self ; not only almighty, but omnipotence it self ; thus, God is knowledge, that is, the Knowledge of Himself ; He is

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The Divine Perfections.

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ove, the Love of Himself, or, of his own infinite perfections.

And this the Scriptures do sufficiently declare. 1 S. Jo. 4. 8. "God is love. And the same is again affirm'd v. 16. He is eternity, Pf. 39. 5. "Mine age is nothing before Thee; or in comparison with Thee. That is, with thy age. Here God himself is set for his age, or eternity. And Christ is truth, and life. S. Jo. 14. 6.

And This we cannot truly affirm Of any created nature; that its Substance and perfections are the same. We find indeed in Scripture, that powers, qualities, and the like, are sometimes put for the created substances. Thus both good and evil Angels are called, principalities, and powers, Eph. 1. 21. and 3. 10. and 6. 12. Col. 1. 6. and 2. 15. Thus idols and images are call'd, Vanity, and lies, and some men likewise so stil'd. Pf. 62. 9. "Surely men of low degree are Vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. And we are not hence to conclude, that such powers, qualities, or weaknesses are the very Substance it self. But where any perfections are affirm'd Of God; as, that He is love, or truth, we are to conclude that they are his Substance: In Scripture therefore we are always to consider, what the subject matter, or thing spoken of, is. And so we may discern that where it is said Of created substances, that they are powers, vanity, or lies, the expressions are figurative, and are accordingly to be interpreted: but where God, the uncreated Substance is stiled, life, or truth, or love, such words, by reason of the perfection of his nature are to be understood Of him not figuratively, but in their proper sense, to wit, that life, truth, love is the very Substance of God.

And surely, we have a more perfect knowledge of God; when we own that He is life, than when we ascribe life to him, or say, that he is the living God; when we affirm, that he is beauty it self, than when we say, he is beautiful; that he is happiness it self, than to say, he is happy. When we affirm of any Man that he is knowing, or good, we make a distinction between the man himself, and the goodness, or knowledge we ascribe to him; we consider

these as some additions made to his nature, or ornament of the same. And we easily discern, that a man by having knowledge, or goodness is not so perfect, as if he were goodness, or knowledge it self: and by reason of this imperfection, a man may continue in being, though knowledge and goodness were lost from him, for they are not his nature, and therefore he may Be, though they be not in him. But with God it's otherwise. Holiness is his Nature: knowledge is his Substance; power is Himself; Eternity, his Godhead: Whatever is in God is God. And therefore, whatever he is, he alway is; his perfections cannot by any power whatever be taken from him; nor can he part with any of them, for they are Himself.

CHAP. VIII.

The Incomprehensibleness of the Divine nature.

AS to what we have shewn in the foregoing considerations, that the Divine perfections are all the same one with another, and that they are the very Substance of God, we are sure of the truth herein, but we are not able to comprehend the same.

We necessarily conceive Of God, in this life, according to the weakness and imperfection of our own nature. Now in man, the understanding and will are commonly held to be in some sense different both from the Substance of the Soul, and from one another; so likewise, knowledge from goodness, wisdom from justice, and the rest of the Vertues from one another. And hence we ordinarily think Of the perfections of God, as if they were different from one another, though at the same time we are able to prove that there is no difference at all either of parts, or powers, or perfections in God, but that all in him is one and perfectly the same.

So that in this world we have rather the shadow of the Divine nature in us, than the knowledge of what he is in himself. And accordingly, the Apostle affirms, 1. Cor.

13. 9, 10. 'that what we now know of God is only
'in part, and that when that which is perfect is come, then
'that which is in part shall be done away. The knowledge
therefore that we have of God in this world is imperfect;
and if we had here the perfect knowledge of the Divine
nature, there would be no reason to think, that that which
is perfect should be done away hereafter. It is only in
the world to come, as the Scripture declares. 1. S. Jo.
3. 2. 'That we shall see God as he is. 'And that we shall
'know even as we are known, 1 Cor. 13. 12. And this
being reserv'd for the reward of the Saints in glory, we
cannot hope for such knowledge of him in this life. Only,
in the knowledge of him we may, and ought to grow, as
long as we live. And the less imperfect our thoughts of
the Divine perfections are, the more we shall be convinc'd
of this truth (though never able to comprehend the same)
that the life, eternity, power, holiness, goodness, love,
of God, are all the very same thing, the very nature of
God. And this should beget in us an awfull reverence of
the Incomprehensible Nature, which will be more pleasing
and satisfactory to the Soul, than that more perfect know-
ledge that some pretend to.

CHAP. IX.

The Incomparableness of the Divine nature, and the
Incommunicableness of his perfections.

THERE is no Comparison between God and his creatures.
Creatures we may compare one with another, even the
highest with the lowest, and find something that is common
to both: but there is nothing common to God with his crea-
tures. The perfections of the humane Soul, which is made in
the image and likeness of God, do in some sense Resemble the
Divine Perfections, but they are not the same in any thing
with any of them. Isa. 40. 18 'To whom then will ye liken
God? or 'what likeness will ye compare unto him? God alone
therefore is wise, powerfull, good. He only is life, eternity, un-
changeableness.

changeableness. Wisdom, goodness, power are not the same in God, and in man; and the same is true Of his Substance, Nature, Persons. Whatever is in God is peculiar to himself, and cannot (properly speaking) be Communicated to any creature. But Of the Communication of the same nature from the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost, we may speak hereafter.

We usually indeed attribute life, Substance, power, wisdom, goodness, not only to God, but likewise to Angels, and men; as if they belonged in common to them all, or were the same for nature in God, and in his creatures. And the Scriptures use many of the same words in speaking Of the perfections of God, Angels and men. For there we read Of God, that he is holy, just, mighty, good; we read likewise of good, just, holy, mighty men; and Of the wise, the mighty, good, holy Angels of God. Further, Of God it is said in Scripture, 'that he is mightier than his creatures, Ps. 93. 4. 'That he is most just, Job 34. 17. and elsewhere he is stil'd the Most high, and the Highest: as if the same perfections that are in him, were likewise in some of his creatures, but in him in the highest Degree. But these expressions are used Of God in condescension to our weakness, who are not able in this life to think of him, as he is in himself, our thoughts being vastly disproportionate to the truth of the Divine perfections, as they are all the same one with another, and all of them the One Substance of God. We ordinarily think Of his perfections, as if they were really distinguish'd one from another; and when we so do, we necessarily think Of each of them, as if they were imperfect, each perfection wanting something which the other has: And in this weakness of our thoughts, 'tis no wonder if we imagine, that there is a nearer resemblance of the Divine perfections, in men and Angels, than there really is.

But there are declarations enow in holy Scripture to convince us of our error herein. For there we read, "that God only is wise. Rom. 16. 27. "that he only is holy, Rev. 15. 4. 'that he onely hath immortality. 1 Tim. 6. 16. 'that there is none good but one, that is God, S. Matt. 19. 17.

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It is not therefore strictly true, to say that God has all perfections in the Highest Degree; as if other Beings might have them, or some of them, in a lower: but the perfections of God are of a different Nature from what are call'd by the same name in the creature, and are in Him only. And therefore, to say, that God is Holy is more, or a more perfect expression of his Holiness, than to say, he is Most holy; and to think that he is Powerful, more than to think he is Most powerful. For in the first way we believe and own, that the holiness and power, that is in God, is peculiar to himself, so that there is nothing of it in the Creature; but in the latter way (most holy, most powerful) though we set God above all beings, yet we seem to intimate, that something of the same holiness, and power belongs to the creature: whereas we ought to believe, that the highest perfections of any creature have that natural imperfection in them, that it is impossible that any of them should be in God; and that on the other hand, the perfections of God are of so excellent a nature, that it is impossible that a creature should have any of them, in any degree whatever.

And thus to think Of God is to give unto him the glory due to his Name; to own, not in word only, but in heart and truth, that God alone is powerful, that he Only is wise, just, holy, good. Nor can we glorify him as we ought without thus believing concerning him. The Scripture commands us to worship God alone. S. Matt. 4. 10. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And the same they require of us, as to hope or trust, and love. A curse is there pronounc'd on him that trusteth in Man, Jer. 17. 5. 'Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man. And the Psalmist declares of himself, that he loved none but God. Ps. 73. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. But thus to love God alone, and so to trust in, and worship him we cannot, unless we believe, that he Only is powerful, and wise, and holy, and good. And it is to our own comfort when we thus glorifie God by having right apprehensions of the

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Incomparable Excellence of his Nature, and by being accordingly affected towards him.

C H A P. X.

God is a Spirit.

FROM what we have discours'd of the Purity or Uncompoundedness of the Divine Nature, we may be convinc'd Of the Spirituality of the same. And for this we have the exprefs Testimony of our Blessed Lord and Saviour. S. Jo. 4. 24. 'God is a Spirit. He therefore is not a Body, and being pure and uncompounded there is nothing bodily in him. We have shewn, that his very Nature is life, knowledge, holiness: that he is life it self, and truth it self. Now, life it self has no figure; knowledge it self, no shape; truth it self, no colour. These Divine perfections have nothing bodily in them; and the same is necessarily true Of his immensity or the boundlessness of his Nature, his eternity, and all other his perfections: for we have shewn, that the nature of all of them is the same, and that all are truly One. God therefore is wholly of a Spiritual nature, he is a Spirit, and nothing else.

But there are those, who have entertain'd other opinions concerning him, affirming that he is a Body: a spiritual Body they will own him to be, but a Body still, and that of humane shape, or figure. What they commonly alledge for themselves is, that the parts of a humane Body are frequently in Scripture ascribed to him; for there we read Of the face of God, Of his eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, feet.

Here therefore, for the preventing, or removing of this error, we have several things to offer to your consideration; which we shall reduce to one of these two heads, 1. The fountain of the error. 2. The pretended ground of the same.

1. As to the fountain of their error, who think, that God

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is Of a bodily substance, we suppose it to be the weakness of Imagination, and the general proneness of mankind, since the Fall, to the love and thoughts of sensual, earthly things: with which we may be so far possess'd, as to be from hence prone to imagine, that there is nothing of a different nature from the things that we know by our senses; that all substances, whether we see, or see them not, are bodies, that there neither is, nor can be, any other substance; and so shall be apt to take what the Scriptures speak concerning the eyes and ears, the hands and feet of God in a literal sense. Though such expressions of holy Scripture are not the true reason of our error: But the weakness of our imagination, and our proneness to judge of all things thereby is the reason of our misunderstanding the words of God concerning himself.

A Sign of this weakness of our imagination is the general proneness of Mankind to Idolatry: to worship the things they see; as, the heaven and the earth, the Sun, Moon, and Stars: and likewise to worship God by Images, and these often made in the figure and shape of Man. Even the Jews themselves were prone to Idolatry. Into which they Often fell, notwithstanding the severe prohibitions of the Law that was given them, and the sure Punishments inflicted on them for their Idolatry.

Nor have all Christians kept themselves clear in this matter: but notwithstanding the more plain revelations made in the Scriptures of the New Testament, Of the Spiritual nature of God, and that they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth, the worshipping of God by images has been taken up by many. And although they of the Reformed churches declare against all such practises, yet 'tis to be fear'd, there are many, who, if they seriously consult their own hearts, and consider what apprehensions they commonly have of God, when they discourse of, or pray to him, will find that their thoughts of God are sensual, that there is something of bulk and figure in that representation they have of him in their Souls. 'Tis certain, that the love of sensual and earthly things naturally betrays us to foolish thoughts, and false

false apprehensions of God, and that there are many who call themselves Christians, and yet are more under the dominion of their own imaginations, than of that truth which is in Scripture reveal'd to us.

But now, as to the faculty or power of Imagination, we should consider, that although it be part of the work of God in us, and as such, there is no evil, nor error therein, nor need we be betray'd to any error or evil thereby, yet it is of a low and weak nature, and but little exalted above our outward bodily senses: and cannot represent any thing to us, but what we have received at one time or other from our senses, as, colour, shape, sound, tastes, or other bodily pleasures or pains. The imagination indeed can present these things to us when our senses are asleep, or otherwise hindred from acting, but yet it is it self of a bodily nature as truly as they are.

The Imagination therefore is not the seat of Faith; it cannot represent any thing truly to us of what the Scriptures declare concerning the nature of God, or (what is the same) his perfections. Of him we can have no perception, but by an higher power of the mind or Spirit, and there it is that faith is seated.

Of the weakness of Imagination, and the vanity of men in following it, and how thereby they become Idolaters, the Scriptures often speak. See Jer. 9: 14. 13: 10. 16: 11, 12. Rom. 1: 21, 22, 23. And how much soever we may condemn the way of those who worship God by outward Images, yet if we form an Image of him in our Souls, we are guilty of Spiritual Idolatry, and break the second Commandment. The danger of which should make us afraid of following the errors of our imagination, and willing to use all our endeavours to entertain more pure and spiritual thoughts concerning the Divine Incomprehensible nature.

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

The pretended ground of their error, who think that
God is a Bodily Substance.

OF the true Fountain of the error of those who think that God is a Bodily substance we have spoken in the foregoing consideration: we come now to speak of the ground they pretend to, and that is those passages of holy Scripture, wherein the parts of a humane body are ascribed to God.

That some things in the Scripture are spoken Of the Divine nature Literally, others Figuratively, we have observ'd before, Ch. III. and shewn withal, that we may and ought (for our Faith and Salvation depends thereon) distinguish between the one and the other, and discern what in Scripture is Literally, what Figuratively spoken concerning God. That we may and ought so to do in the thing we are now discoursing of, we shall shew in the two following considerations.

I. Where the Scriptures declare, that God is a Spirit, that he is life, truth, love, it is evident that such expressions are to be taken in the literal Sense, for they are literally true concerning God. Christians know that the highest perfection belongs to God: and the expressions we have mentioned, that God is a Spirit, that he is truth, life, love, are such as import the highest perfection, and therefore they are true Of him in their Literal sense.

But this we cannot affirm of the other passages, wherein the parts of a humane body are ascribed to God. For, to have eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, feet, do plainly argue Imperfection, and therefore cannot in the literal sense agree to God. To have eyes, ears, &c. is to consist of several parts, and this is nothing less than to be made up of imperfections. The consideration of the nature, either of, a part, or of, the whole, will evidently shew this. How perfect soever we imagine each part of any Compound to be, yet it wants the perfections which the other parts

parts have, and therefore is in it self imperfect. The parts likewise of any Substance are imperfect, if compared with the Whole: for the whole is more perfect than any of the parts are, Since therefore we ought not to think that there is any kind of imperfection in God, we must own (if we will own the truth in the Great things of Salvation) that He consists not of parts. And accordingly we have shewn (Ch. IV. V. VI. VII.) that there is no manner of composition in the Divine nature. That the very nature or Substance of God is life; that his life is the very same with knowledge; that his knowledge is wisdom; his wisdom, holiness; that any Divine perfection is all the rest; that they are all One perfection, and That One perfection is God. And therefore, there are no parts in him, and consequently, those places of holy Scripture that speak Of the face, eyes, nostrils, &c. of God must be understood in a mystical sense.

2. Besides that what the Scriptures declare of the Spiritual nature of God is a sure Proof that there is nothing Bodily in him; In many of those places, where parts like to those of a humane body are ascrib'd to God, there is something added, as it were on purpose, to prevent, or remove the error of those, who would argue thence, that God is a Body: So that in the words themselves we may see that they are not to be taken in a Literal sense.

Thus Prov. 15. 3. it is said ' That the eyes of the Lord 'are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Here eyes are ascribed to God, but it is declar'd withal, that his eyes are in every place: But this, even they who imagine that God is a body, do not think to be Literally true Of him. They hold not that the whole body of God (much less that a part of it) is in every place. And therefore may see, that the words are to be understood in a Spiritual sense, to wit, that the knowledge of God extends to all things, that he considers the hearts and ways of all the children of men.

Again, it is said 2 Chron. 16. 9. " The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth. They who

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who think that God is a Body, will be ready to say, that this expression of Running to and fro throughout the whole earth, would in its Literal meaning better agree to the feet, than to the eyes of God, and therefore must own that the words are Figurative: and consequently, that the meaning is, that God by his knowledge and providence both sees and takes care of all things.

Let us consider in the Last place, the meaning of that expression Acts. 7. 49. "Heaven is my Throne, and earth is my foot stool; and That of our Saviour, S. Mat. 5. 34, 35. "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is his foot-stool. Here, according to the Literal import of the words, God is represented as one of a great bulk and stature, Sitting in heaven, with his feet reaching to the earth. But they who think that God is a Body, believe no such thing to be Literally true concerning him, or, that he is of so great a stature; for they hold that he is much about the ordinary height of a man. And therefore must own these words in S. Matthew, and the Acts, to be Figurative: and ought accordingly to own the same concerning other places of Scripture, where hands, or feet, or other bodily parts or members are ascribed to God, that such expressions are Figurative, and made use of in condescension to our weakness, and to help us to more easy thoughts of the knowledge, and power, and presence, and working of God in his creatures.

C H A P. XII.

The Self-existence, and Infiniteness of the Divine Nature.

WE are further to believe concerning God, that he is Self-existent and Infinite.

1. He is Self-existent. Self-existent life, holiness, knowledge, power, and all other perfections. He is all Of himself. He owes not his perfections to any other Being,

Being, he depends not in the least on any other nature for having, or enjoying of them. And this the Scripture sufficiently declares in that sacred Name of his, which we have had occasion more than once to mention, I AM.

But this truth of the Divine Self-existence is not alway as soon assented to, as heard. Of all other natures that present themselves to our outward senses, or inward thoughts, we are apt to enquire, Whence they are; What is the reason or cause of their being? And hence we are prone to put the same question concerning God, Whence is He? What is the reason or cause of His being?

And when we enquire Of any other nature, a few thoughts employ'd about the same will convince us, that it is not Of itself. For, discerning that it is limited to time, or place, or some Degree of perfections, we conclude, there must be some Cause of such limitation: and that therefore it has not its being Of it self. Were it Of it self, there is no reason to think, that any other nature could set limits or bounds to it. For, for any thing to be Of it self is the Highest perfection, and where this is, no other can be wanting. In what nature therefore soever we discern any imperfection, any limitation of power, or of any other perfection, we are sure that That nature is not Of it self, but owes its being to another. But as to God Blessed for ever, it is Folly to enquire, whence he Is, or, what is the Cause of his being: The Glory of his nature consisting in this, that he is Self-existent, that he owes not His being to any nature whatever.

2. Being Self-existent He is Infinite in all perfections. He is not limited to any Time, or Place, or any Degree of perfection. He is boundless in knowledge, in power, and in all other Excellencies.

1. In knowledge or understanding. So the Scripture expressly declares. Ps. 147. 5. 'Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. He therefore is an all-comprehending Thought, or Mind: He knows all things that ever were, or are, or shall be. He knows his own Glorious Nature, his own Infinite Self. The Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mutually and perfectly

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fectly know one another. S. Matt. 11. 27.
 ' No man (a. no one) knoweth the Son but
 ' the Father; neither knoweth any Man
 ' (b. any one) the Father, save the Son, and
 ' he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.
 And the same is true Of the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. 2. 10.
 ' The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of
 ' God. And V. 11. ' The things of God knoweth no man,
 ' but the Spirit of God.

2. His Power likewise is Infinite. He is Omnipotent (Almighty) He can do all things. The Scripture so frequently declares this, that particular places need not be mentioned: and we have spoken something Of it before. We shall only add, that what is true Of the Understanding and power of God, the same is true likewise Of his holiness, goodness, and all other his perfections, they are all Infinite.

And this Self-existence and Infiniteness of God is a glory Peculiar to himself. All other beings are finite, they are limited, as to their natures, and perfections, they have both the beginning and continuance of their Being, from God, they depend every moment on Him, for any endowment they have, and for their very being. For nothing by being in One moment has power to continue to the next, save That only, which is Self-existent, that is, has its being Of it self. Of all other Beings we are thus to think: that as where a heavy weight is by main strength lifted up into the air, it must necessarily fall to the ground, if not supported by the same (or equal) strength, whereby it was lifted up, so every creature must fall into nothing, if not supported or upheld by the same Almighty Power, whereby it was brought at first into being.

From what we have here shewn Of the Infiniteness of God, it follows, that he is Infinitely Different from all beings, because Infinitely more Excellent than all. For in all things wherein he excells other natures he is Different from them, and therefore he is infinitely different in all things, because in all infinitely more excellent than they.

Hence likewise the truth of what we have discours'd

(Chap. VIII.) does more plainly appear, that we cannot comprehend the nature of God: For his nature and Infiniteness are the very same, and it is not for Creatures since they are necessarily finite, and limited in their knowledge, to presume to think, that they can comprehend what is truly Infinite.

C H A P. XIII.

Of the Holy Trinity.

THE Christian faith concerning the Holy Trinity is, that in the One, Infinite nature of God, there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy proceeding Spirit. This the Scriptures sufficiently declare: and the summe of the

a. Cited very anciently by S. Cyprian. De Unit. Eccles. §. 4. Et iterum, de Patre, & Filio, & Spiritu Sancto. Scriptum est; Et hi Tres Unum sunt.

Christian faith herein is contained in those words of the Apostle.

1 S. Jo. 5. 7. a. "There are
" three that bear record in hea-
" ven, the Father, the Word,
" and the holy Ghost: and these
" three are One. There are

' Three that bear record in heaven. This shews the Distinction of each of them from the other two. ' And these three ' are one. This shews the unity of their nature.

The difficulty, that many find in believing of this, arises, not only from the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine nature, but likewise hence, that, contrary to the Scripture, they frame Imaginations Of God, as if he were a Bodily substance. How prone mankind is to this, we have already shewn, and that, even among those who profess to believe that God is a Spirit, there are some who are too prone to entertain gross and carnal imaginations concerning Him. Now as to any such, when they hear Of three Persons in the Divine nature, they are ready to cloath each of them with bulk and shape; and hence conclude, that if there were three Persons in the Godhead,

Godhead, there would be three Substances, and three Gods: This last they cannot believe, and so are tempted to doubt Of what the Scripture declares concerning the Three persons. Nor is it possible for them to believe any thing aright concerning the Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, while they have such gross thoughts concerning God, as to imagine that something Bodily does naturally belong to him. It may help in part to the curing us of these errors that arise from our imaginations, to consider well the nature of our own Souls, and the thoughts that arise in us from our Mind or Spirit. We cannot be ignorant that our mind begets thoughts within it self, and when we are satisfied that our thoughts are according to truth, a Spiritual pleasure arises from such assurance and knowledge: this pleasure proceeds both from the Soul, and from the truth that we conceive; and yet in all we have mention'd, there is nothing but what is Spiritual, All for Substance is but the One mind or Spirit of man.

CHAP. XIV.

In the Text, and other passages of the Old Testament there are Intimations of plurality of Persons in the Divine nature.

THE plurality of Persons, or, that there are more Persons than One, in the Divine nature is, at least, intimated in the words of the Text. 'God said, let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. It's plain that in these words more than one speaks, yet not more than one God: Of what then can the words be understood, but of more Persons than one? Tis true, there is not here a declaration of Three persons, nor of their nature, that one is the Father, another the Son, and the third, the Holy Ghost, but we may from the words infer, as the ancient Christians generally did, that in the Divine Infinite nature there are more Persons than one. Such an Inference cannot seem strange to those who believe the Scriptures of

the New Testament, where the truth of the Divine nature is more fully reveal'd. It was the way of God, by the mouth and pen of Moses and other Prophets, in dark expressions of the Old Testament to intimate those great truths that were more plainly and fully to be revealed in the New : This Christians know to be true in very many instances, and so have reason to believe it in this.

And there are many other Expressions in the Old Testament, of the like nature. Some of them we shall here mention. Gen. 3. 22 ' The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as One of Us. Chap. 11. 6, 7. ' And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language ——— Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language. Isa. 6. 8. I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for Us ? Such passages were generally in the Ancient Church understood and explain'd, as they are among Christians at this day, as intimations of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

They who like not this interpretation have invented others. Some affirm that God thus spake to the holy Angels: Others that he used the language that Sovereign Princesses sometimes do : for so a King, though but one Person, sometimes speaks Of himself as Of many, We command this or that to be done. We will shew, that neither of these Interpretations are so probable as That, we have mentioned, of the Primitive Church, and that, consequently, the Generaliry of Christians go on surer grounds in the Interpretations they give of these expressions.

And first, as to what some fancy, that God spake these words with respect to the holy Angels, we shall shew the vanity of this, by a short review of the several Passages, beginning with That of the Text.

' God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. That he spake not this to the Angels, will appear by several considerations. 1. The Scripture tells us not, that God consulted with the holy Angels about the creation of man. 2. He who thus spake, and They to whom it was said, ' Let Us make man, was He and They by whom

whom man was created ; and that is God alone, with his Son and holy Spirit, not the Angels : For the Scripture no where says, that man was created by the Angels ; but, that he was created by the Father, by the Son, and by the Holy Ghost, they frequently declare. 3. The words were spoken by, and to him or them, in whose image man was created : and that man was created in the image of God, the Scripture declares ; but never, that he was created in the image or likeness of the holy Angels.

The next place is Gen. 3. 22. ' The Lord God said, ' Behold the man is become as One of Us. Of, or To whomsoever it is, that the Eternal Father here speaks, it is plain from the words, he counts them as his equals, he reckons Of himself as one of them. Now, if with the generality of Christians we understand this Of the Father speaking concerning Himself, his Son, and holy Spirit, the Account is easy : But, on the other hand there is no probability, that the Infinitely Glorious God should number Himself among the Angels, or make himself to be as one of them.

Gen. 11. 6, 7. ' And the Lord said ; Go to, let Us ' go down, and there confound their language. ' The ' Lord said. In the Original it is, Jehovah, the true and only God said : and that the following words ' Let Us go down, were spoken likewise to the same God, is evident. For it appears from the words, that they were spoken by, and to him, who there confounded the language of all the world, and it was God that did this, as we read V. 9. ' Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because ' the Lord did there confound the language of all the ' earth.

' Isa. 6. 8. ' Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ' whom shall I send, and who will go for Us ? ' Whom ' shall I send ? This is spoken by One. Who will go ' for Us ? This, by many. And both by the same God. We read indeed in the Verses before, that the Seraphims (holy Angels) were present with God, when he thus spake. But how can we without adding to the Scripture, affirm, that in this Expression he join'd them with Him-

self? The Prophet says it not; rather the contrary. It was the Lord that said, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? The Prophet speaks before, Of the Seraphims, both how they appeared, and what they spake. V. 3, 6, 7. and might with the same ease have So express'd it Here, as that we might plainly have seen that these Words, Who will go for Us, were spoken by, or concerning them, if so indeed they were. But this he does not. There is further reason to think that the words had no relation to them. The Seraphims are Messengers Themselves, not they who are to send others; The Scriptures generally declare that Prophets are sent by God himself. It is concerning Himself therefore, that these words are spoken, Who will go for Us.

From these considerations on these several Texts we think it evident, that the Interpretation that Christians commonly give Of these Passages of holy Scripture, to wit, that they refer to the holy Trinity, is much more probable, than Theirs, who affirm, that God spake these words Of, or to the holy Angels.

We come now to the other Explication, that God in these expressions spake, as Sovereign Princes sometimes do: A King may say, We order this or that to be done, though he be but One person who orders it.

To this we answer, Though earthly Sovereigns do sometime so speak, it is not the Kingly stile, or that which best becomes them. I order, I command, is the language that better fits the Sovereign Power, when it is in one Person alone. Where a King speaks otherwise, it is either because he is King in name only, not in truth; as where the Sovereignty is divided between him and others: and then he may well join others with himself. If a true King say, We command this or that, 'tis commonly a sign of weakness, or fear. Of weakness; as where he stands in need of Counsellors, and uses them, and so joins them in such expressions with himself. Of fear; as where a King makes a harsh or rigorous Law, and says, We command this; in so speaking he removes in part the Odium and harshness of the Injunction from himself, and lays it

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on others, to prevent the hard thoughts his Subjects might entertain Of him, for the harsh or grievous Law that he makes. We see then, that where a King speaks of himself as Of many, 'tis not the Voice of Sovereignty and Majesty, but rather, what his weakness, or fear prompts him to.

And therefore, though earthly Sovereigns do sometime so speak, their Language is commonly otherwise; I charge; I command: And so it was in ancient times, when the Scripture was written. Thus Nebuchadnezzar speaks, Dan. 3. 29. 'Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, &c. Thus, Cyrus, 2 Chron. 36. 23. 'All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of Heaven given Me. And so, many Kings after him. Dan. 6. 26. 'I make a decree. Ezra. 4. 19. 'I commanded, and search hath been made, &c. Ezra. 6. 8. 'Moreover, I make a decree. And so v. 11. and 12. and Chap. 7. v. 13, 21. The same was the language of the Kings of Israel; and of Moses himself, as may be seen, Levit. 10. 18, Deut. 4. 5.

It appears therefore, that the language that best befits a Sovereign Prince is to speak Of himself, as One person commonly speaks; If sometime he speaks otherwise, it is either because he is a Sovereign only in name, not in reality and truth; or it is because of his weakness, or fear. But therefore since no such reasons have any place in God, the true and only Sovereign of heaven and earth, since he needs no counsellor, nor is subject to any weakness, or fear, we ought not to think that it becomes him to imitate the language of those who are Kings in name only, or of weak, or fearful Princes. And that therefore, where he speaks Of himself as Of many, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. Behold the man is become as One of Us. Let Us go down. Who will go for Us? there is another reason why he so speaks, even that which the Christians in ancient times generally assign'd, and what Christians commonly still do, to wit, because the Divine Nature, though it be in Substance One, is in Persons many.

C H A P. XV.

Further proof, and explication of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

THE Mystery of the Adorable Trinity, which was not so fully reveal'd (yet agreeably to the way of God with his people in those ancient times) in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, is more plainly and fully reveal'd in the New. As, in that Passage we have already cited, 1 S. Jo. 5. 7. 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are One. In the Form of Baptism which Christ appointed, S. Matt. 28. 19. 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the words of the Apostle. 1 Cor. 12. 4, 5, 6. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. And in that form of Apostolical Benediction, 2 Cor. 13. 14. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

In these and many other places of Scripture the Doctrine of the holy Trinity is plainly delivered. Of which we think necessary to speak something more largely; to wit, Of the Names, Personality, and Nature, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

I. 1. And first, Of the Father, the First Person in the holy Trinity. The First; not in Time, for the Divine nature is only One substance and Unchangeable, and therefore the Three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: But the First, as being the Original Fountain, whence the Son and the Holy Spirit are. And by this name, the Father, with respect to his eternal Son, he is every where stiled in the Scripture.

2. As to his Personality; the Father, is a Personal name;

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and therefore there must be something in God that answers thereto. And the name of a Person is in Scripture given to him. Heb. 1. 3. where it is said Of the Son, that he is 'The express Image of his Person, that is, Of the Person of the Father.

3. As to his Nature; that the Father is God, the Scriptures frequently declare. S. Jo. 3. 16. 'God so loved 'the world, that he gave his Only begotten Son, that 'whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have 'everlasting life. This is plainly spoken Of God the Father. The Son owns the same. S. Matt. 11. 25. 'I thank 'thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

And, the Father, he Everlastingly and Unchangeably is. He continued The Father, after that the Son was Incarnate, or made flesh, as appears by the constant language of Christ in the Gospel, frequently styling him, the Father, and praying to him. And he is often call'd, the Father, and spoken of as really Subsisting, even after the Ascension of Christ into heaven. Thus the Apostle, Phil. 2. 11. declares the end of Christ's Exaltation in heaven to be, 'That 'every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, 'to the glory of God the Father. Thus S. Paul declares Gal. 1. 1. that himself was made an Apostle, 'by Jesus 'Christ, and God the Father. And to the Father he appeals, 2 Cor. 11. 31. 'The God and Father of our Lord 'Jesus Christ, which is Blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie 'not. To him he prays, Eph. 1. 17. 'That the God of our 'Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him. And him he blesses V. 3. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And many other Expressions there are Of the same nature, which shew, that whatever the Father Was, the same he eternally and unchangeably Is, even the Father of his Coeternal Son.

II. The Son, the Second Person in the Adorable Nature.

1. Frequently stiled in Scripture, The Son, the Son of the Father, the Son of God. He is called likewise, the Word, S. Jo. 1. 1. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

‘ Word was with God, and the Word was God. And,
 ‘ the Word of God, Rev. 19. 13. ‘ His name is called,
 ‘ The Word of God.

2. That he is a Person is evident. For, the Son, is a Personal name, it speaks the Relation he has to his Father, and therefore he is a Person, as his Father is. And he is so declared to be, Heb. 1. 3. where he is stil’d, ‘ The
 ‘ brightness of his glory and the express Image of his Person. The express image of his Father’s Person, therefore a Person Himself. The word here translated, Person, signifies likewise, Substance, and some have here so translated it (The express image of his Substance) But the same truth as necessarily follows from this translation, as from the other. The Apostle here speaks Of the Eternal Son, ‘ by whom, v. 2. God made the worlds. ‘ Who, v. 3. ‘ is the brightness of his glory, and ‘ who by the word of ‘ his power (his own powerful word) upholds all things. He (according to this other translation of the word) is the express image of his Father’s Substance. He therefore is not his Son in name only, not a weak, corporeal brightness, not a flitting but Substantial word, the express image of his Father’s Substance, therefore undoubtedly a Person, as his Father is.

That he is a Person, is further evident from what the Evangelist declares concerning his Eternal Generation, or being Begotten Of the Father. S. Jo. 1. v. 1. with the 14.
 ‘ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
 ‘ with God. — And the word was made flesh, and
 ‘ dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory
 ‘ as of the only Begotten Of the Father. This Character, the only Begotten Of the Father, is not given to the Flesh, but to the word : It is not said,

a. Τὴν δόξαν we beheld the glory of It, but, we beheld
 αὐτὸν, not, a. His glory, that is, The glory of the
 αὐτῆς. Word. Of this Word it is said, v. 1. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God. The glory of this word ‘ that
 ‘ was in the beginning with God, is v. 14. ‘ the glory
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Son of the Father : so that, the word that was in the beginning with God, and the only Begotten, or only Son of the Father, is the Same, and therefore is a Person, as the Father himself is. We add, that as to this his Eternal Generation, or being Begotten, Of the Father, we are not to mean any thing carnal, or bodily thereby. But, as God himself is a Spirit, even, the perfection of Life, knowledge, holiness, power, goodness, uncompoanded, indivisible, unchangeable, infinite ; so we are to believe the same concerning the Generation of the Son, It is a Living, Spiritual, Eternal, and Unchangeable act, not now past or over, but alway the Same, and alway Perfect, as God Himself is.

That the Son is a Distinct Person from the Father, and the Holy Ghost is evident from what the Scripture declares Of his Incarnation, his becoming man for our sake. For this is every where spoken of as proper to the Son alone, not as common to him with the Father, and the Holy Ghost : and it is only by the Scripture language that we know what we are to believe concerning this great Mystery of the Incarnation. This, we say, is in Scripture spoken only Of the Son. S. Jo. 1. 14. 'The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Gal. 4. 4. God sent his Son made of a Woman. Heb. 2. 14. 'Forasmuch as then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself (the Son as appears from the foregoing words) likewise took part of the same. And so where-ever we read Of this Mystery of the Incarnation, it is spoken Of the Son, never Of the Father, nor Of the Holy Ghost. Tis true, where-ever the Son is, there the Father and the Holy Ghost are ; and it is said of Christ, Col. 2. 9. that 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily : And therefore, the Father, and the Holy Ghost, as well as the Son, dwell in the man Christ Jesus. But the union of the humane nature with the Divine (as appears by the places now cited) points to, and is terminated on, not the Person of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost, but of the Son : and therefore he is a Distinct Person from them.

3. That

3. That the Son is God, and therefore, the same God with the Father (for there is but One) the Scripture likewise fully, and manifoldly declares.

1. His being Begotten Of the Father is a sureproof of this. He is Of the Father, not made, nor created, but Begotten. Not made, that is, out of any other Substance; not created, out of nothing; but Begotten Of the Father, by a Spiritual, Divine Generation, and therefore he is of the same Substance that the Father is.

2. The Scriptures expressly and frequently declare that he is God. Thus the Inspired Prophet, Isa. 7. 14. Cited and applied to Christ, S. Matt. 1. 23. 'They shall call his name Immanuel, which is being interpreted, God with us. Thus the Psalmist, Ps. 45. 6. 'Thy throne, O God, &c. declared to be spoken concerning the Son of God, Heb. 1. 8. 'Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The same, S. John declares, Jo. 1. 1. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And Thomas, one of his Apostles, owns. S. Jo. 20. 28. 'Thomas answered, and said unto him, my Lord, and my God. Nothing can be more plain, express, and full, than these Testimonies of Holy Scripture are, and there are very many the like.

3. That he is God is further prov'd hence, that the Divine Perfections (Of which we have shewn before, that they are the very nature of God, and belong to none, but God) belong to him. Thus, Infinite knowledge, Eternity, Almightyness, are in Scripture ascribed to him.

4. The works, that none but God can do, are likewise ascribed to the Son: as, the Creation of the world, the Upholding of all things, and many other Divine works. This third, and fourth reason we have chosen barely to mention; the particular places of Scripture for the proof of the same, need not to be alledged, they are many and well known. And, to conclude this point, Christians may as truly affirm, that it is as plain from Scripture, that Christ, the Son of God is God, as that he is man.

III. We proceed to speak Of the Names, Personality, and Godhead of the holy Ghost.

I. Of

1. Of his Names. He is stiled in the Scripture, the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Breath of God, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

2. That he is a Person, these Names of his, do declare. A Spirit, or Ghost, when apply'd to him is a Personal name, as the name of the Father, and of the Son is. A Spirit indeed is sometime used in the Scripture, to signify the very Substance of God, as S. Jo. 4. 24. 'God is a Spirit. Here it signifies the Substance or Nature of God, the One Substance of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Sometime likewise the Spirit, may signify the Power, or working, of God; and sometime, a disposition in the heart of Man. But, the Spirit, and, the holy Spirit, and, the holy Ghost, are exceedingly often used in the Scripture (as any sincere reader or hearer may easily observe) not to signify any of these, but a Divine Person, who is neither the Father nor the Son. The Original words, both in the Hebrew of the Old, and the Greek of the New Testament, which are Translated, Spirit, or Ghost, do commonly likewise in Scripture signify Breath, so that Spirit, and Breath, are in Scripture-language the same, and, the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, is the Holy Breath of God. And, his Breath, he is stiled in the Scripture; Ps. 33. 6. 'By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and 'all the host of them by the Breath of his Mouth: that is, All things were made by the Son, and the Spirit, of God. For the Creation of the world is elsewhere ascribed to his Spirit, Job 26. 13. 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the 'Heavens: Beautified and adorned them with the Sun, moon, and Stars. Ps. 104. 30. 'When thou lettest thy 'Breath go forth they shall be made: In the other Translation, 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created. This his being stiled, the Breath of God, seems to be an Intimation of His eternal Proceeding from him. For a further proof of which, and possibly, to Intimate, that the Holy Spirit Proceeds not from the Father only, but likewise from the Son; it is said Of Christ, S. Jo. 20. 22. that when he gave the Holy Ghost to his Apostles, 'He 'Breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. And

And that He proceeds from the Father is expressly affirm'd, S. Jo. 15. 26. 'when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which Proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit, and, the Holy Ghost, is so exceeding often mentioned in the Scripture with peculiar and distinguishing Characters, that they who receive their faith from the Scripture must needs own, that He is a Person distinguished from the Father and the Son. Take we first for instance, the fore-cited place, S. Jo. 15. 26: There it is said, that He Proceeds from the Father, therefore, in Person he is different from him. Different likewise from the Son, for the Son of God stiles the Holy Spirit, Another comforter, S. Jo. 14. 16. 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you Another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even, the Spirit of truth. Another Comforter, or Different, from Christ. For Christ here speaks of his own going out of the world, and of the Father's giving to them the Holy Ghost for another Comforter, to comfort them in Christ's stead: He is therefore Another Person, or Different from him. If it be said by any, that the Holy Ghost is here stil'd, a Comforter, only with Respect to believers, so that the most that can be hence infer'd is, that he is a Person in respect to them, not in respect to the Son, or Different from Him, we answer, that, from his being stil'd Another comforter, it follows, that He is a Different Person from Christ: For, how could He be to believers Another comforter, if He were the Same Person with him?

Now, as to the Proceeding of the Holy Ghost, it must be consider'd, that It is Living, Spiritual, and Divine, as the Generation of the Son is. The Procession is Eternal, without beginning, change, or end, never over or past, yet ever perfect, as All things in God are. And being Eternal and Infinite, It is not to be Conceived by us. Though possibly, there is some weak resemblance of this, in the Soul of man: where comfort, love, joy, Proceeds From the Soul, and yet is inseparably united to it. Much more easily

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easily may we believe the same concerning the Divine Procession of the Holy Ghost : that He Proceeds from the Father and the Son, without any Separation or division from either of them.

3. The Holy Ghost is One God with the Father and the Son. This is evident from many considerations.

1. From what the Scripture declares, Of his Proceeding from the Father. This not only proves that He is a different Person, but likewise, that He is of the same nature with the Father. He Proceeds from the Father : He is not made, out of another Substance ; He is not Created, out of nothing. He is not Begotten, for that belongs only to the Son. But he Proceeds from the Father, according to the Perfections of a Spiritual, Lively, Divine Procession, wherein there is neither motion, change, separation, nor any thing else that belongs to corporeal procession, and therefore He is of the Same Nature that the Father is.

2. The Name, and nature of God is in Scripture ascribed to him. In the form of Baptism, which our blessed Lord appointed, S. Matt. 28. 19. the Apostles are commanded ' to Baptize, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: We cannot doubt but that Christ here commanded them to Baptize in the Name, of God, and therefore, the holy Ghost is God, as the Father and the Son are. And so He is call'd Acts, V. 3, 4. ' Ananias, why hath Satan fill'd thine heart to lie to the holy Ghost——thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. For the Holy Ghost is one with the Father and the Son, and therefore the Same Divine Substance that they are. 1 S. Jo. 5. 7. ' There are Three that bear record in heaven, ' the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost : and these ' Three are One.

3. The Divine Perfections, Will, and Workings, (Things that belong to none but God) are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost. The Divine Perfections; as, Infinite knowledge, 1. Cor. 2. 10. ' The Spirit searcheth ' all things, even the deep things of God. A Divine Will, and Infinite Power. 1 Cor. 12. 11. ' All these worketh ' That one, and the self same Spirit, dividing to every ' man severally as He Will. Thus

Thus from the holy Scriptures we have given a brief account of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity: which is so plainly there delivered, that how to believe the Scripture without owning of this Mystery we know not.

But, when we say that this Mystery is Plainly delivered in the Scripture, we mean, that the Words, wherein it is delivered, are as plain as words can be. So that the difficulty of understanding of this Mystery is not from the words of Scripture, but from the nature of the thing, even the Glory of the Divine Nature, which is not to be comprehended by us. For as to the true or proper conceiving of God in our hearts, in this life, we have shewn before, that we cannot hope for it: Not so much as to know his Perfections here, much less his Persons. So that in this life, the adorable mystery cannot (properly speaking) be Known, but must be Believed, by us. For what ever conceptions we have in this world, either of the Divine Perfections, or Persons, they do not exactly answer to either of them, as they really are in God, but are only a shadow, or weak representation of them.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the Use and meaning of the word, Person, when applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

THE difficulty of apprehending of this Sacred Mystery, of the Eternal Father, Son, and holy Ghost, being One God; and the consequent backwardness of some to Believe the same, (we suppose) the reason, why they scruple at the use of the word, Person, which is commonly us'd by Christians, when they declare their faith concerning this Adorable Mystery. And therefore we think it necessary to add something concerning the ancient use, and meaning of the word, continued down through all ages to our own time, which may suffice to convince all peaceably minded Christians, Of the innocence of the Expression, and that therefore they need not fear to use the same.

It is altogether unbecoming a Christian to strive about words: such contentions are straitly forbidden. 2. Tim. 2. 14. 'Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words. And what the bad temper of those who so contend, and what the effect of such contentions is, the apostle likewise declares. 1 Tim. 6. 4, 5. 'Thereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.

What the Christian Church generally believes is known to all: That, From all Eternity God is a true Father, a real Son, a true Proceeding Spirit. This their faith they express, in short, in These words, There are three Persons in the Divine nature. Whoever will own the truth, In the former of these two ways, will undoubtedly be own'd by the whole Christian Church for a true believer. If he scruple at the latter and shorter way of expressing his faith; if, though he own, that, God is a true Father, a real Son, a true Proceeding Spirit, yet he is unwilling to say, that there are three Persons in the Divine nature; either he is afraid, of what he has indeed already said, or he loves to strive about words, and This, we see, the Scripture condemns.

That Christians did use this word, very near the times of the Apostles; that, Three Persons, One God, was their language, is very plain from the ancient Writers of the Church; out of whom we shall produce a few Testimonies, for the proof of the same.

Justin Martyr, a very ancient Christian writer, citing that Question that is in the Psalmist, Ps. 24: 10. 'who is the King of Glory? has these words, a. 'The Holy Ghost *a. Dialog. Græco-lat. Paris p. 255. Ἀποκρίνεται αὐτοῖς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ ἀπὸ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου.*

answers, either in the Person of the Father, or his own, The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Here we see, That very ancient Father and Martyr gives the Name of Person expressly to the Father,

The Divine Persons.

Father, and to the Holy Ghost, and distinctly to each.

Clemens Alexandrinus, concerning the Son of God, has these words, 'Where the
 b. Pædag. l. 1. c. 7. *Id est* ' Son speaks b. in his own
quod id est Patet. ' Person, he professes himself
 ' to be a Master, or Teacher,

' (saying) I am the Lord thy God which have brought
 ' thee out of the land of Egypt. Here this ancient
 Father declares, that it was the Son of God, that from
 mount Sinai thus spake, I am the Lord thy God. So
 that Clemens speaks, not Of the humane, but of the
 Divine nature of Christ, and expressly calls him, a Person.

Tertullian in his Book against Praxeas thus
 a. Cap. 11. writes, a. ' All the Scripture shews the e-
 ' vident truth or certainty, and the Distin-
 ' ction, of the Trinity. And then, having produced se-
 veral Passages out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament,
 to prove, that the Spirit of God shews There the distincti-
 on of the Son From the Father; and particularly some
 Places, where the Spirit speaks to the Father concerning
 the Son, he adds, 'He who pronounces these words is the
 ' Spirit; it is the Father, to whom, and the Son, Con-
 ' cerning whom he pronounces them, and so the rest of
 ' the Scriptures do the same, which are spoken, sometime,
 ' to the Father concerning the Son, sometime, to
 ' the Son concerning the Father,
 b. Unamquamque ' and these Scriptures b. constitute
 Personam in sua Pro- ' every Person in his own Property.
 prietate constituunt. That is, the Scriptures declare, that
 every one of them is a Person, by
 the Personal Property that is Peculiar to him.

Again, in the same Book a. he thus
 a. Cap. 12. speaks; ' If the number of the Trini-
 ' ty does still offend thee, as if they
 ' were not join'd in single Unity, I ask, how he, if he
 ' were only one and singular, speaks as Of many, Let
 ' Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness?
 ' Whereas if he were only one and singular, he ought to
 ' have said, Let me make man in my image and likeness.

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And then having produced another Passage of Scripture, Gen. 3. 22. 'Behold the man is become as One of Us; he thus argues, 'God might be said to deceive us, if he were One (Person) and alone, and singular, and yet speak Of himself, as of many. He then mentions the Interpretation of the Jews, that God spake this to the Angels: and rejecting it, affirms the reason of the expression to be this; that b. Imo, quia jam adhaerebat ei Filius, Secunda Persona, Sermo ipseus; & Tertia, Spiritus in Sermone.

'The Word, the Second Person was now with the Father, and the third Person, in the Word.

Again, In the same Chapter, having cited That of Gen. 1. 6, 7. 'God said, Let there be a firmament, and God made the firmament; He declares that it was made by that Word of God, Of whom it is said, S. Jo. 1. 3. 'All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. And then he thus argues, 'If he (the Son) be God, according to that of S. John, The Word was God, then you here have Two; One speaking, that the firmament 'should be made; Another, making it.

And adds, a. that he had already declar'd, how you should understand, [Another] (that is, how there is another in the Divine Nature) 'That it is on the account of a Person, not of Substance; and for Distinction, not for Division. That is, The Son is Another Person, though not Another Substance; He is Distinguished, but not Divided, from the Father.

By these Testimonies it appears, that the Ancient Christians used this word, Person, Of the Father; Of the Son, and Of the Holy Ghost, severally and distinctly Of each of them. And some of these we have cited more at large, that it might appear, not only, that they used the words, Person, and, Trinity, as we do; but like-

wife, that we have the same Faith, that they had; And that they Interpreted the Scriptures of the Old Testament concerning this Myſtery, as we do. For the Ancient Chriſtian writers commonly produce theſe Texts, Gen. 1. 26. and. 3. 22. and ſome others, and Interpret them concerning the Holy Trinity, as Tertullian does.

Now theſe Writers, whoſe Teſtimonies we have produced, lived very near the times of the Apoſtles. Juſtin Martyr wrote within forty years after the death of S. John the Apoſtle. And Clemens, and Tertullian within fifty years after Juſtin Martyr. And they all ſpeak Of the Divine Perſons. They that wrote in Greek

α. Πρῶτον. uſing α. the word that with them ſignifies, a Perſon: and Tertullian the word *Perſona*, whence our Engliſh word, *Perſon*, comes.

We ſhould further obſerve (and it is a truth own'd by all) that in the time when theſe wrote, both the Spirit of Prophecy, and the power of working Miracles, continued in the Chriſtian Church: ſo that while the Holy Ghoſt was powerfully, and in an Extraordinary manner preſent with them, this language of Three Perſons in the Divine Nature was in Uſe, which ſure is enough to commend the uſe of the word to us, as it has done to the Chriſtian Church in all the Ages before us.

As to the meaning of the word, *Perſon*: When it is applied to Created Beings, it is uſed, ſometime in a Relative, ſometime in an Abſolute ſenſe. In a Relative ſenſe; as, when we ſay, the Perſon of a father, of a King, a husband, a ſon, and the like; meaning thereby the Relation wherein they ſtand to others, as, That of a father to a ſon, of a ſon to his father, of a King to his ſubjects, &c. In an Abſolute ſenſe; as, where any particular man, ſubſiſting by himſelf, as Peter, or Paul, is call'd, a Perſon.

It is I ſuppoſe, according to the firſt and Relative ſenſe, that the word is commonly uſ'd, concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And what the Scripture declares concerning the Son's being Begotten of, and the Holy Ghoſt's Proceeding from, the Father, is a ſufficient Proof of the Relation that is between them: which Relation

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tion suffices to justify the Use of the word Person, in this Sacred Mystery.

If we apply it to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (as some do) in the second and Absolute sense, it is only, that we may the more plainly declare the Reality of Their Subsistence, but without owning a Real Separation, either of Nature, or Persons.

Whether we use it according to the one or other of these senses, or both; a Person signifies That in God, of which, the meaning of the word when applied to man, is but an Imperfect resemblance, or shadow. For we have shewn before at large, that no word can be truly applied to God in that very sense or meaning wherein it is used Of man, or of any other creature: But though there be some resemblance, yet there is a great difference between the senses wherein it is used Of the One, and of the other.

But now, if any one, by a Person, means otherwise then Christians commonly do; If he means thereby, a Bodily, or any other Finite Substance, and therefore fears to use the word in this Mystery, as if the owning of Three Divine Persons were the same as to affirm there were Three Gods: his fear is owing to his own error, he means otherwise by the word than Christians do. For they, believing that God is One pure uncompounded Spirit, neither do nor can believe, that there is any thing, either of Bodily, or any other Finite Substance in Him: Nor therefore can mean any thing by a Person when apply'd to God, that is Inconsistent with the Unity, or Purity, of his Nature.

I shall only add, that it is, neither by the Eternal Father's Parting with the Divine nature, nor by Dividing of It into several parts, that the Son and the Holy Ghost come to partake of the same: But by a Communication Thereof from the Father to the Son, and from the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost.

That there is a difference between such parting with, and dividing, and communicating, is evident. A man may so give what he is posselt of, to another, as himself to part with it; or he may divide it, between himself and others;

or he may communicate what he has, to others, that is, make them joint possessors therein with himself. The Divine nature is not so given by the Father to the Son and the holy Ghost, as that he himself parts with it; nor is it parted between the Three: But the same Nature is Communicated by the Father to the Son, and by the Father and the Son, to the Holy Ghost, so, as that the Three have the joint possession of the same. But we must alway remember, that between humane things and Divine there is a wide difference: and so in the instance we have now given. And particularly herein, that, the communication of the right or possession of any thing, from one man to another is a Free act: But in God, the Communication is neither free, nor forc't, but Natural and necessary, as God himself is.

C H A P. XVII.

Of the Image of God in man.

MA N being created in the Image and likeness of God, and the natures of God and man being in Scripture set before us, it will be no difficult matter to apprehend something of that image of God, wherein man is created. By such reflection on our our own nature, our thoughts and meditations on the Divine Perfections will become more easy, and in time more familiar and delightful.

Of which before we speak, we shall (to prevent misconstruction and mistake) briefly premise Three things.

1. That the Nature of God being incomparably Excellent, we are not to look for any thing in man, that truly belongs to the Divine nature, or Persons. For there is nothing, truly the same, in God, and in the creature. It is only some faint resemblances, or shadows of the Divine Perfections, and Persons, that in man we are to look for.

2. Man being the most excellent of all the visible creation, and not perfectly known by himself. According to the

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the Different apprehensions we have Of our own nature, there may well be variety of opinions, as to those powers, or perfections of man, whereby the Divine nature is represented.

3. While some think, that the image of God consists in one thing, some in another, their several opinions may all of them be true. For it's possible we may in many things be made in the image, and after the likeness of God.

We shall now propound some things of this nature to your consideration, Leaving every one at liberty to judge of what we say, and to receive, or reject the same: Or to find better representations of the Divine Perfections, or Persons, in man, than any we have to offer to them. And,

1. It may be said, that the image and likeness of God in man consists in the Dominion that God has given him over the lower world, and the creatures that are therein. That God, when he created man, design'd to give him such dominion, we have in the Text: And that such dominion was accordingly given to him, we read, V. 28. ' And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be ' fruitfull, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and ' subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the Sea, ' and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing ' that moveth upon the earth. This may therefore be thought to be (at least a part of) that image of God, wherein man was created. He made man the Lord of the lower world, and so, the image of himself, who is Lord of all.

But it will likely be said, that this dominion given to man is rather a representation of the Dominion that God has over all beings, than of the Nature of God, as he is in himself, and that it was rather a consequent of man's being made in the image of God, than the image it self. As it seems to be plain from the words: It is first said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and Then, Of man considered as made, Let them have dominion over the fish of the Sea, &c And that this dominion

was given to him, after he was created, is evident from V. 28. Agreeable therefore it was to the wisdom and goodness of God, that unto man created in his image and likeness dominion should be given over this lower world, but the image it self is to be sought in something else. But however this be, we shall add another consideration of near affinity with it. To wit,

2. That the image of God may in part consist, In the power that the Spirit of man has over his soul and body, In its presence with, In the love it has to, and the care it takes Of them.

§ 1. We have an image of the power of God in the power that the Spirit of man has over its soul and body. The Spirit has dominion over the desires and passions of the soul, and over many motions of the Body. No sooner does the Spirit will to move the eyes, hands, or feet, but they obey. And is herein an image of the mighty power of God, who by his mere Will rules and governs all the things he has made.

§. 2. The near and intimate presence of the Spirit with the Soul and body is a representation of the Divine Omnipresence, his being Present with all things. The Spirit of man is sensible of all the passions of the Soul, and of many motions of the body : and so seems to be intimately present with them, as God is with all things. Disputes have been rais'd, whether the Spirit of man be more intimately present with one part of the body than another : And if it be, which part of the body it is primarily or principally united to. And as to this, some have assigned the brain ; others, the heart ; Others affirm that it is every where present in this its little world (the body) and so a more perfect resemblance of the Presence of God with the whole World. As to the love the Spirit has to the body, and the care it takes of it, and the resemblance it bears herein to the love and care of God, to and over all his creatures, we think it not necessary to enlarge.

3. We may consider, that the Scripture declares, that God is a Spirit ; and his Son is often there stil'd, the Word ; and the Third Person, the Spirit or Breath of God.

And

And these three, the Spirit, word, breath, are likewise of principal consideration in the nature of man. The Spirit the fountain and seat of our thoughts and desires; the word, the Interpreter of the mind, or Spirit, and so, a sort of image of the same, or That whereby we manifest our thoughts and desires, to others; the breath of man, that likewise is considerable, it is the breath of life. Since therefore the language of the holy Scripture concerning God is, that he is a Spirit, or Spiritual Substance; that he has within himself, his Word, and his holy Breath, or Proceeding Spirit, and that there is in man, what answer to these, we may reasonably think, that we are herein made in the image and likeness of God.

They who are accustomed to more refined thoughts of the Spiritual nature of God, possibly will not relish this; yet, we think, the language of Scripture herein is not to be overlookt: And that, if we may not hence infer, that man is on the account now mentioned, made in the image and after the likeness of God; yet at least, that there is in him on this account, a weak representation or shadow of the Divine Persons.

But Lastly, It will still be said, that since the Immortal Spirit is the most excellent part of man, it is reasonable to look for the image of God in That alone, by considering what it is, in it self, and in respect to it self. God is a pure uncompounded Spirit, the perfection of Life, Knowledge, Holiness, Love, Happiness, and therefore it is in the Immortal Spirit of man, the created fountain and seat of knowledge, holiness, love, that the image of the Infinite Spirit, Three Persons and One God must likely be found.

But in what Spirit of man must we look for this? We are all of us more or less depraved by error and sin, and it is not easie to find the image of God in any such. There is something indeed of the original work of God, some knowledge of truth and goodness, and a necessary liking of the same, remaining in the Spirits of all men, and so much of the image of God they all have: But this knowledge, and liking finds not in the depraved Spirit of man any thing farther, that is agreeable to it self; No good dispositions, resolutions,

resolutions, or the like ; nor the effects of these, the peace, comfort and joy of a good conscience. So that there is nothing in the Spirit of sinners that answers to what naturally is in God, the Glorious Image of Himself, and the Spirit of peace and love and joy : Rather, what is contrary to These. For a sinner lives not according to his knowledge, but often chooses what he knows to be evil. And this his own choice is another part of his Spirit, but contrary to the former : It is a dreadful thing of his own making, and contrary to the work of God in him. It stares him (as it were) in the face, disturbs and terrifies his Soul, makes him ashamed and afraid of himself. And this shame and dread is the result of the two former ; his knowledge, and his acting contrary thereto. But in these Three, there is no image of the Blessed Trinity : They are a monstrous composition, and contrary Thereto. The image of God therefore is to be looked for, only in a regenerate man, One who believes the truth of God, lives accordingly, and has the comfort thereof.

But this image is to be found in greater perfection in the Spirit of man, considered as it was in the state of Innocence. Wherein the First thing that offers it self to our consideration is, That knowledge and holiness wherein man was created. This was the first part, or original work of God, in man ; and the fountain of Two other things to be considered in him. For in man so created there was, Secondly, An act of Self-reflection : The Reflection that Adam made on his own nature, on that knowledge and holiness wherein he was created. By which reflection, or knowing himself, he had a lively, lovely image of himself within himself. And between these Two there is a necessary Distinction, and yet they both are in Reality the same Spiritual Substance. And Thirdly, This image he had of himself being perfect in its kind, and truly lovely, there must necessarily, hence proceed Spiritual pleasure and joy : Which so proceeding, is on that account Different from the other Two, yet not divided from either. And so, in man considered as in the state of Innocence, we may discern something of That image of the Blessed nature

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nature of God the holy Trinity, wherein man was created and made.

But (to draw to a Conclusion) we do not affirm, that the Mystery of the Adorable Trinity may be discovered by humane reason. The knowledge or faith of This is owing to Revelation, to what is declared of the same in holy Scripture: And it is by the assistance of Grace that we believe what is there Reveal'd. Eph. 2. 8. ' By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of your selves: ' it is the gift of God. Whatever knowledge of the Divine nature we may attain to, from what we discover of the nature of the Immortal Spirit of man, falls far short of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity, as It is in the Book of God revealed to us. From the Distinction of Perfections, or powers (or whatever we think fit to call them) in the Spirit of man, it follows not that there is any such Distinction in God, Who is a most pure uncompounded nature. Nor are the Distinctions that are in the Spirit of man, a ground of any Difference of Persons in us, for a man is but One Person. And so, we can learn little hence concerning the Three Divine Persons: Much less concerning the nature, or state of each of them. In created natures, there are Persons of very many and different names and kinds: But the Mystery that the Scripture declares concerning the Divine Persons is particularly and determinately This, that, the one is a Father, the other a Son, the Third, a Proceeding Spirit. So that we have the true faith concerning God, only from the holy Scripture. But since the Scriptures themselves declare, that it is in the image and likeness of God that we are made, it is undoubtedly lawful (if not necessary) to endeavour to learn, wherein this image and likeness does consist; or what it is in man that bears some resemblance to the Nature of his Glorious Creator.

And as it is, in the image and likeness of God that we are made, so it is, Into his image and likeness, that by believing in him through Christ we hope to be renewed. For so the Apostle describes it, Col. 3. 10. ' The new man ' which is renewed in knowledge, after (according to) the image

' image of him that created him. And, Eph. 4. 24. ' The
' new man, which after, or according to, God is created
' in righteousness, and true holiness.

To conclude : That, God Blessed for ever is One,
Only, Self-existent, unchangeable Life, holiness, wisdom,
goodness, power, truth, and all other Perfections ; that
he is the perfect Knowledge ; and infinite Love, of all
these ; A true Father, a real Son, a true Proceeding
Spirit, is what our Christian Profession obliges us to
Believe Here : And to Know the Same is eternal Happi-
ness, hereafter.

' The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
' and the love of God, and the commu- 2 Cor. 13. 14.
' nion of the Holy Ghost, be with you
' all Amen.



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